United Nations A/C.1/54/PV.3

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

First Committee
3rd Meeting
Monday, 11 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. R. González ..... (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We are fortunate to have with us today the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala.

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all delegations for the honour bestowed on my country and on me by my election to the chairmanship of the First Committee.

This current session of the First Committee — the disarmament component of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly — is the last of the twentieth century. Looking back, one can see how the Committee has sought to consolidate what has been achieved to date in the field of disarmament and how it has encouraged the formulation of guidelines and the evolution of norms and practices in certain areas and promoted the negotiation of new legal instruments on the reduction and elimination of particular weapons and weapons materials. It has made an indispensable contribution to the overarching aim of the Organization to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Our responsibility at this session is to carry that work forward. This mission demands of us all the necessary determination and vision to develop what I might call "sustainable security" to guide humanity more safely into the future. I am sure that I speak for all of us here when I say that the timing of this session on the cusp of the new century sharpens our appreciation of the stark importance of the task before us in this Committee and lends urgency to our efforts. These efforts have a global reach, but their effectiveness in many instances is multiplied by work at the regional level.

Weapons of mass destruction rightly preoccupy the First Committee and I have no doubt that this concern will be reflected in the draft resolutions to be placed before us. Although it is recognized that the Russian Federation and the United States have made substantial progress in reducing their large nuclear arsenals, there is widespread feeling that they must strenuously pursue their efforts with the support of the international community and, as soon as is appropriate, with the participation of the other nuclear-weapon States until the world is entirely free of these anachronistic arms. This Committee anxiously awaits confirmation from those two States that the talks on a START III treaty, which were announced in June, will indeed get under way shortly and lead promptly to actual negotiations.

In the past year and a half, we have suffered very serious setbacks in the area of nuclear non-proliferation, with nuclear testing in South Asia, missile launches and the development of missile technology for defence, a step that could have grave repercussions for strategic stability and nuclear disarmament. Although the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature three years ago, it has attained only 26 of the 44 ratifications needed for its entry into force, and only two of those are from nuclear-weapon States. The recently concluded Vienna Conference was convened by the Secretary-General at the request of the ratifying States, pursuant to article XIV of the Treaty, in an attempt to facilitate this very process.

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Another source of concern is the fact that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to agree on its programme of work and to begin negotiations on a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, despite indications at the end of 1998 that this would, indeed, be possible in 1999.

These disturbing developments have been exacerbated by events beyond the field of competence of this Committee. The resulting international climate does not appear propitious for substantial nuclear disarmament measures in the near future.

This session of the First Committee will be the last before the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In this connection, I am sure we all welcomed the statement of 23 September by the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council, in which they reiterated the need for universal adherence to the Treaty, reaffirmed their commitments to nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament under its article VI, and expressed their willingness to contribute to the successful outcome of the Conference. I hope that this statement augurs well for a truly strengthened review process for this Treaty, which is key to progress towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. It is surely time to avoid the dangers inherent in further proliferation by confronting the challenges of disarmament. I might add that this statement of the permanent five underscores the linkage between the issues we deal with in this Committee and the mandate of the Security Council to maintain international peace and security.

Members of the Committee are well aware that it is not enough to have legal norms in place. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that parties comply fully with the obligations they have freely assumed. While it is not the function of the General Assembly to monitor compliance with legal instruments, it has consistently supported the work of relevant treaty bodies to strengthen verification and compliance mechanisms so as to deal decisively with any party that is found in violation.

Delegations have followed closely the steps taken by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to implement the rigorous verification regime established by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. They have also welcomed the progress achieved to date with respect to strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and have called upon all States parties to accelerate the negotiations and redouble their efforts to formulate an efficient, cost-effective and practical regime for verifying compliance. Moreover, they have emphasized the importance of universal adherence to the Additional Protocol adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1997, which provides the foundation for realizing the full potential of the Agency's safeguards system underpinning the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

For the past several years, the international community's failure to agree on priorities to carry out its disarmament agenda has severely hampered the work of its institutions, notably the Conference on Disarmament. Deep differences of perception and approach regarding the items on nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space prevented the Conference from establishing any subsidiary bodies or appointing any coordinators this year, despite the best efforts of its successive Presidents.

As all members know, the outgoing President, Ambassador Luck of Australia, has undertaken to conduct joint consultations with the incoming President, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, during the intersessional months with a view to commencing substantive work as soon as possible during the 2000 session of the Conference on Disarmament. On behalf of all the members of the First Committee, I take this opportunity to express our support for those consultations and the hope that they will achieve the goal we desire.

Delegations have renewed calls in the general debate of the General Assembly not only for nuclear disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, but also for effective control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These weapons, termed by some "small arms of mass destruction", claim women and children as their chief victims, damage development prospects and imperil human security in many ways. Recognizing the multifaceted threat that their excessive accumulation and illicit transfer pose to security, the President of the Security Council issued a statement in July emphasizing the importance of including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in future peace agreements and peacekeeping mandates. In September, the Security Council considered the related subject of protecting civilians in armed conflict and then, for the first time, devoted a ministerial-level meeting exclusively to the topic of small arms. As a result, more attention is likely to be given in the future to including preventive disarmament among the Council's

strategies for peace-building. Moreover, the advantages of coupling preventive disarmament measures, such as weapons collection, with development incentives will be realized more frequently. We can be sure that the work of the First Committee through the years has contributed to achieving these goals.

As members know, our Committee has before it an unprecedented number of reports to the Secretary-General in the area of small arms: a follow-up study by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms to the 1997 report; a report containing the recommendations of the Secretary-General and the views of Member States on preparations for the international conference on the illicit arms trade; a technical study on problems relating to ammunition and explosives; a preliminary study on the feasibility of restricting the manufacture and trade of small arms to manufacturers and dealers authorized by States; a report on the Secretary-General's broad-based consultations on illicit traffic, including input from two regional United Nations workshops; and a report on assistance to States in curbing illicit trafficking in small arms. Moreover, I expect that the Committee will recommend to the General Assembly preparatory arrangements for the international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, to be held in 2001. The proposal to convene this conference was made at last year's session.

The past year has seen other important developments at the low-technology end of the conventional weapons spectrum. In March, the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines entered into force, and in May the first meeting of the States Parties was successfully convened and its implementation officially launched. In December, the first annual conference of States Parties to Amended Protocol II — a partial landmine ban — to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons will convene in Geneva.

For a number of reasons, I believe that interest is growing in the potential for regional action to further the global agenda. At the regional level, intergovernmental bodies can tailor guidelines and mechanisms devised at the global level, such as the guidelines on nuclear-weapon-free zones and the guidelines on conventional disarmament adopted in May by the Disarmament Commission, to suit the characteristics of their respective regions. In my region of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Organization of American States Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials has entered into force and that organization is working closely with a number of countries to reclaim land from anti-personnel landmines. In Africa, the Organization of African Unity Summit decisions, initiatives of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the Southern African Development Community, the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development and the Economic Community of West African States moratorium all support the work on small arms initiated by this Committee.

We cannot forget the high price paid for excessive armament. Competition to acquire costly, sophisticated arms place an enormous burden on societies that often falls upon the shoulders of those who do not have the means to meet their basic human needs for food, shelter, health and education. The flourishing trade in small, low-technology weapons also absorbs considerable funds that could be applied by societies to more constructive ends. We also know that the destruction and, in the case of landmines, detection of weapons can be extraordinarily costly. In some war-torn and conflict-prone areas, the paucity of funds for social and economic purposes is made even more acute by the need to divert development resources to emergency and rehabilitation operations. I hope that all delegations will address these pressing issues in the coming weeks.

As members are well aware, the First Committee has many items before it, of which some are long-standing and others relatively new. I could even say that some are deploringly long-standing. As I mentioned earlier, work on these items is made more difficult by the lack of agreement on priorities. Unfortunately, this past spring, the Disarmament Commission was not able to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, although it achieved a larger measure of agreement than it has during any of the previous three years of its deliberations. A special session, if successfully convened, would provide authoritative direction for concerted efforts for some time to come. That much is obvious, to say the least. In the coming weeks, along with other business that requires my attention — in connection to which the Chair remains particularly open to any suggestions — I will be reviewing the situation with the Bureau to see what action should be taken to pursue the possibility of convening a fourth special session on disarmament.

In any event, I believe that a robust disarmament agenda must be developed if we are not only to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, but also to promote better standards of life in larger freedom. The international community must continue its struggle to

eliminate weapons of mass destruction. It will have to reach a common understanding of what constitutes legitimate national self-defence requirements and a sustainable balance between defence and socio-economic needs. The international community cannot avoid confronting the implications of the changing nature of conflict, from violence waged between States to violence waged primarily within States, and of the need for new preventive strategies, the key to resolving conflicts through preventive diplomacy. It will have to ensure that the revolution in technology, including information technology, truly benefits human society as a whole.

Let us therefore begin our task in a spirit of good will and cooperation.

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the First Committee, I warmly welcome Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, who will address the First Committee on the opening day of its substantive work.

Mr. Dhanapala (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau, upon your election to guide the work of this Committee. Your long diplomatic experience, which includes service on the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, equips you well for the tasks ahead.

The Committee will be taking up some timely and very complex issues on the international security agenda. This challenge has been rendered all the more formidable by a number of developments over the last year that have jeopardized existing disarmament agreements, while at the same time military expenditures are once again on the rise in many countries. These events, which include a significant increase in 1998 in the frequency of intrastate wars, only further underscore the vital role that the United Nations must play in upholding existing norms of international peace and security and in forging the necessary political will to establish new agreements.

Together, we must refuse to accept that war, weapons of mass destruction or the excessive accumulation or illicit transfer of arms are now just hallmarks of the natural human condition. We must reaffirm our collective commitment to the principles of the Charter, including the peaceful settlement of disputes and the duty to protect non-combatants in wartime environments. As the Secretary-General recently stated in his report on the Work of the Organization, "there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment and no greater ambition than preventing armed conflict" (A/54/1, para. 36). Disarmament is central to that task and to the creation of a culture of prevention.

The opening of the deliberations of this Committee is always an occasion that is greeted with great anticipation. Seen in its historical context, which you have noted, Sir, today's event has some special significance. Exactly 60 years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt received a letter from Albert Einstein stating that extremely powerful bombs of a new type could be manufactured from uranium. Yet, while the race for the bomb may well have originated on this date, the demand for nuclear disarmament was not far behind. In 1946, the General Assembly's first resolution called for

> "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". (*resolution 1(I), para. 5(c)*).

Today, we are less than 2,000 hours from the next millennium. This in itself should inspire a renewed commitment by delegations to forge a new consensus on all outstanding issues.

Tomorrow will mark the official date when the world population is expected to pass the six billion mark. The vision of the world community passing into a new century, with both growing populations and growing inequities in opportunities and incomes, constitutes a potential nightmare for international peace and security, all the more so in a thermonuclear age. This only further underscores the fact that disarmament and development are mutually reinforcing and vital to world peace and prosperity.

Perhaps the most consistently difficult issue on the Committee's agenda over the years has been the goal of accomplishing global nuclear disarmament, and the global trends in this area are once again mixed. Though nuclear-weapon stockpiles have declined significantly since the days of the cold war, tens of thousands of such weapons remain in existence — many on high-alert status, many ready for first use in future conflicts and many available for tactical battlefield use.

With respect to strategic nuclear weapons, the START II Treaty has still not entered into force and, while preliminary discussions have begun, negotiations have not

yet started on START III. Other important treaties have not yet entered into force, including the Pelindaba Treaty creating an African nuclear-weapon-free zone and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which will prohibit all nuclear-weapon-test explosions and all other nuclear explosions.

Last Friday in Vienna, just two days before the thirty-sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the partial test-ban Treaty, participants attending the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT issued a Declaration renewing their determination to work for universal ratification of this Treaty and its early entry into force. While the shocks from last year's nuclear tests in South Asia continue to reverberate throughout the global non-proliferation regime, hopes remain that India and Pakistan will soon join the Treaty.

With respect to controls over nuclear material, 45 countries have agreed to adhere to the Additional Protocol developed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to strengthen nuclear safeguards. The world community must build on this achievement towards the goal of acceptance of these responsible controls by all countries with civilian nuclear programmes.

As the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) prepare for next year's Review Conference, more progress is also needed in encouraging the 52 NPT States without safeguards agreements in force to conclude such agreements and to bring them into force without further delay.

In the Conference on Disarmament, efforts to conclude a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices have not yet reached a consensus. Because of the dangers associated with the acquisition of such material by non-state groups, efforts have been under way in the United Nations to negotiate a convention on the suppression of nuclear terrorism, which, when concluded, would contribute to the global culture of prevention.

Positive efforts are also under way to improve controls specifically over nuclear-weapon materials. For example, the Trilateral Initiative, a collaborative effort involving the Russian Federation, the United States, and the IAEA to verify excess weapon-origin fissile materials, has so far resulted in the placement of several metric tons of such materials under safeguards. The preliminary success of this Initiative should encourage these countries to expand the amounts of material covered by these controls and inspire other nuclear-weapon States to follow this precedent as a positive step forward in implementing their own disarmament commitments.

The need for greater progress on global nuclear disarmament was specifically addressed last May by many representatives attending the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, a session that concluded without an agreement on any substantive recommendations. On 23 September this year, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the five permanent members of the Security Council issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitments to nuclear disarmament, as well as to general and complete disarmament under article VI of the NPT. They also reaffirmed their commitment to the decisions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Prospects for the success of next year's NPT Review Conference will depend to a considerable extent upon whether these countries can agree beforehand on concrete measures to implement such commitments.

With respect to other weapons of mass destruction, the record is also mixed. The numbers of parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are growing, yet still fall well short of universality. The States parties to both Treaties are nevertheless continuing to recruit others, while efforts are under way in Geneva in the ad hoc group to strengthen the BWC through the elaboration of verification and confidence-building measures.

With respect to missiles, the Secretary-General noted in this year's report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1) that the development and testing of longer-range missiles, together with the development of missile defences and the fact that large numbers of missiles are available for launch on warning, seriously threaten peace and security. If the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty — which leaders from both the United States and the Russian Federation have called a "cornerstone of strategic stability" — crumbles under the weight of new pressures to deploy national missile defence systems, the world community may soon lose another cornerstone as well: its long-sought goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. The Secretary-General has recently reiterated that "multilaterally negotiated norms" are needed in all these missile areas.

In light of the rising incidence of conflicts involving conventional arms, perhaps the most welcome development over the last year with respect to controls over such arms has been a significant increase in international awareness of and concern over the tragic human toll from the excessive

accumulation and illicit trafficking in such weapons, especially small arms and light weapons. A major international conference will likely be held in 2001 to address the latter problem in particular.

Yet serious challenges remain, especially with respect to transparency. For example, more countries need to submit data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, established in 1992, and more need to use the United Nations standardized instrument for the reporting of military expenditures. Obtaining accurate data on transfers of small arms and light weapons remains a difficult task indeed. More generally, the arms industry is undergoing a rapid process of globalization, which is also complicating both national and international regulatory efforts. And difficult challenges remain in strengthening the enforcement of United Nations arms embargoes.

With respect to controls on small arms, some welcome progress has been under way — especially in South America, Europe, and Western Africa — with respect to controls over transfers of such arms. Weapons collection efforts organized by the United Nations in Albania offer a good example of additional progress in this field, and collectively these efforts illustrate what can be accomplished when the will is there. Last September, I attended a ceremony at which weapons collected in the Gramsh Pilot Project in Albania were symbolically destroyed by mechanical cutting in the main square of Gramsh, in central Albania, a country that recognizes that disarmament can play a significant role and pay significant dividends for development. One of the Secretary-General's Messengers of Peace, actor Michael Douglas, is participating today in another weapons-destruction event in Albania, while also inaugurating the construction of a new road.

With respect to anti-personnel landmines, the entry into force within the last 11 months of both the amended Protocol II of the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCWC) and the Ottawa Convention were significant steps towards eliminating the scourge of landmines. Even more effort is needed, however, to encourage universal membership in these treaties, if the world is to achieve this long-standing disarmament goal.

With respect to developments within the United Nations disarmament machinery, several are noteworthy. The Conference on Disarmament agreed to expand its membership to 66. The Disarmament Commission was able to reach a consensus on international guidelines both for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for implementing practical disarmament measures involving conventional weapons. However, the Disarmament Commission's inability to reach a consensus on a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament was a major setback, as was the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work during its last session. The Secretary-General, in his most recent annual report, called these two setbacks together "a source of grave and ongoing concern".

The inability of the members of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work, however, should not be attributed to any failure on the part of the Conference as the world's single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. Progress has instead been hampered by the lack of a propitious international environment for major arms reductions. The deadlock in the Conference is a symptom, not the cause, of the global stalemate on nuclear disarmament.

The Department for Disarmament Affairs, though still the smallest department in the United Nations Secretariat, has proposed a budget of $13.5 million for the biennium 2000-2001, or just less than $6.8 million per annum. This will enable the Department to serve Member States by expanding its databases, providing information to permanent missions and non-governmental organizations, strengthening regional approaches to disarmament, and in general promoting multilateral disarmament norms. I encourage all delegations to visit our departmental web site, which contains useful information on disarmament treaties, links to our databases, a detailed description of our activities and a bibliography of departmental publications. One of those publications, the annual Disarmament Yearbook, has served for 23 years as a comprehensive guide to activities throughout the United Nations disarmament machinery. Other departmental publications will be made available to the Committee today. I would also like to encourage all representatives to attend the Department's forthcoming symposium on nuclear doctrine, which will be held in this room at 1 p.m. on 18 October. Previous symposiums have examined the de-alerting of nuclear weapons and missile proliferation.

In closing, I wish to express my most sincere best wishes for the success of your deliberations in the weeks ahead.

The Chairman *(spoke in Spanish):* I thank Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala for his statement, which I am sure will make a significant contribution to, and in fact will be,

the mandatory framework for the deliberations of the Committee.

General debate

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85

Mr. de Icaza (Mexico) *(spoke in Spanish)*: It is my great pleasure to congratulate you on behalf of my delegation on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to assure you of our support in the discharge of your important duties. I also extend congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Recent events on the international scene have gradually dimmed expectations that arose at the end of the cold war — expectations that it would be possible to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons within a foreseeable period. We seem to be approaching the new millennium with a new propensity to use force in international relations and to rely on military means that allow such use to be without risk or cost in material and in lives to the parties involved. We also note an increase in the dependency on nuclear weapons in the form of resuscitated doctrines of deterrence. New technologies on the use of outer space for military purposes have increased strategic tension and fostered mistrust. As a result, nuclear arms reduction negotiations remain at an impasse.

Under these circumstances, it comes as no surprise that almost seven years after its signing, the START II Treaty has not yet entered into force. It also comes as no surprise that for the third consecutive year the deliberations in the Conference on Disarmament have not resulted in substantive negotiations, or that the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has failed to agree on substantive recommendations for the Conference, which is to be held next spring.

It is against this backdrop that the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden met in New York on 22 September to review the progress made on their joint declaration entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". They noted that a degree of complacency had set in with respect to efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and that this complacency must be overcome, mainly through an unequivocal commitment at the highest level to the early and complete elimination of nuclear arsenals. That commitment must be translated into an accelerated process of negotiations to achieve the nuclear disarmament to which all five nuclear-weapon States are committed under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Important gains were made in the field of nuclear disarmament in the years following the end of the cold war. While those gains should be acknowledged, they are still insufficient and do not justify the paralysis that has beset the Conference on Disarmament since 1996, when the General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). I am pleased to announce that my Government deposited our instrument of ratification of that Treaty with the Secretariat on 5 October. This year it will be Mexico's turn to introduce a draft resolution on behalf of the traditional sponsors, Australia and New Zealand, regarding the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and on the need for its ratification by all the States needed for its entry into force.

This year again, a draft resolution will be submitted to the Committee on the need for a new agenda to achieve the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Numerous proposals have been made by many sectors of the international community on the way the process of nuclear disarmament should proceed. In the first place, the basic function of nuclear weapons should be limited to deterring nuclear attack. Consequently, a policy of no first use against nuclear-weapon States should be declared, as well as one of non-use against non-nuclear-weapon States. It is also essential to demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time and to put in place a programme or a series of measures to reduce the nuclear threat. These could include measures to de-alert and deactivate nuclear weapons, withdraw non-strategic nuclear weapons from where they are currently deployed and continue the process of steady and systematic reduction of nuclear arsenals. All of these measures would be consistent with the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was originally conceived as an instrument of change that would allow us to make progress in the task of nuclear disarmament and towards the world free of nuclear weapons that we once had. Despite its indefinite extension, the Treaty must not be considered as a permanent framework for the current state of affairs. The Treaty is the framework of a dynamic process that is useful so long as it makes steady progress towards its ultimate objective: the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

At the 3rd meeting of the Preparatory Committee, my delegation reserved the right to introduce to the 2000 Review Conference a draft resolution on the subject of nuclear disarmament that would outline a programme of action providing specific measures permitting us to move forward towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

My delegation has repeatedly expressed its support for the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee under item 1 of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament that would be responsible for negotiating a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator and the mandate contained therein. We consider that negotiations on this second concrete measure of the programme of action set out in the decision on the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament — which were adopted almost five years ago at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the NPT — should begin at the Conference on Disarmament without delay. We must demonstrate our firm commitment at next year's NPT Review Conference to translate into deeds the programme of action that was agreed upon.

We have stressed that the fissile-material treaty to be negotiated must become a genuine measure of nuclear disarmament. To that end, the treaty should take into account the element of asymmetry in relation to the fissile material that has already been stockpiled. Moreover, in order for it to be effective and truly non-discriminatory, the treaty should also address all aspects of the problem and provide for the prohibition of the production of all materials essential for the production of nuclear weapons.

We welcome the unanimous approval this year in the Disarmament Commission of principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. This confirms the continuing interest of the international community in creating such zones, as well as the valuable contribution these zones make to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the achievement of nuclear disarmament. The contractual guarantees provided in nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties are of particular importance, given the positions stated in the revised Strategic Concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO), including the possibility of using nuclear weapons against countries that do not possess such weapons and the employment of unjustifiable arguments to maintain uncertainty on the part of a potential adversary.

The work of the Ad Hoc Group of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, which should complete the drafting of a verification protocol prior to the fifth review conference of the Convention, to be held in 2001, is now entering into an important phase of definition. The Government of Mexico has stressed how important it is for the Group to fully discharge the terms of its mandate and for the necessary international mechanisms to be established to fulfil the provisions regarding international cooperation contained in article X of the Convention. Such mechanisms should be included in the protocol in order to give them a legally binding character, and should be coordinated by the committee on cooperation that is to be established in the future organization for the prohibition of biological weapons.

Mexico also supports the establishment of a voluntary fund to raise resources for the implementation of specific projects in the field of biotechnology and for the establishment of regional epidemiological networks.

Mexico, together with non-aligned countries, has submitted a proposal for conducting research into outbreaks of illnesses, in the context of the protocol on verification. More recently, it submitted a text on the various types of visits that an foster cooperation and confidence building. That document provides that visits should be made only to previously declared installations.

The growing trend towards the development and deployment of anti-missile defence systems in outer space and the reports of substantial funds being allocated for the implementation of such initiatives underscore the urgent need for the adoption of measures to prevent any attempt to use outer space for military purposes. Last year the Assembly adopted, without any dissenting vote, a resolution inviting the Conference on Disarmament to conclude its review of the mandate contained in its 1992 decision, in order to reconstitute the mechanism for the negotiation of a multilateral agreement that would consolidate and strengthen the legal regime applicable to, and prevent an arms race in, outer space.

Mexico, in keeping with its contractual obligations on the exploration and utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes, has repeatedly called for the restoration of such a mechanism within the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that next year negotiations can begin in that forum on measures to prevent outer space from becoming yet another theatre of confrontation and to avert another arms race. The

international community's demand that negotiations must start on this pressing matter cannot be ignored yet again.

The problem of small arms and light weapons has assumed increasing importance in the multilateral disarmament agenda. We must take global action to counter the threats to international peace and security resulting from the easy availability and uncontrolled use of these weapons. The recent high-level meeting of the Security Council to consider this problem once again underscored the need to agree on measures aimed at reducing the worldwide proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

We reaffirm our commitment to continue working to reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their negative consequences for the peoples of the countries affected. We are of the view that the convening of a conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than the year 2001 represents an opportunity to take measures to prevent and reduce excessive accumulations of such weapons and their destabilizing effects, including the illicit manufacture of, and trade in, these weapons, with a view to consolidating the regional efforts that are already under way.

Mexico believes that preparations for the conference must be adequate in order to ensure its success. We therefore support the proposal that the mandate of the Preparatory Committee to be established this year by the General Assembly should be to define the objectives, scope and start date of the negotiations on the rolling text to be approved by the conference. We support the view that the Preparatory Committee should take into account, in addition to the regional experiences in this area, the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, in particular those on the conference to be held in 2001, which, we are confident, will be enriched by the debates to be held in the Preparatory Committee, in which all Member States will participate.

This year marks the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, the culmination of an exemplary process of participation and partnership between Governments, international organizations and civil society. That partnership was upheld and reaffirmed at the first meeting of the States parties, held in Maputo last May. At that meeting, it was agreed to establish an inter-sessional programme of work to ensure its effective implementation. Two of the five Standing Committees of Experts met last month in Geneva. A start was made to the process of identifying existing needs on the ground in the countries most affected by mines and a review was carried out of existing programmes, ways to optimize their impact and the urgent need to mobilize resources to meet the needs identified.

My Government reaffirms its commitment to continue to contribute to this process in order to make the Ottawa Convention universal and to ensure its effective application, which we hope will bring us closer to the goal of eradicating forever those cruel weapons. As in previous years, the countries committed to a total ban on anti-personnel landmines will submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution inviting all States to sign, ratify or accede without delay to the Ottawa Convention.

The objective of existing international norms in the field of disarmament is to guarantee international security, the right of each State to security and the maintenance of security at the lowest possible level of armament without jeopardizing the security of any State or group of States. Aspirations to disarmament will doubtlessly remain unattainable if any State or group of States intends to maintain military supremacy and is prepared to use force to promote its values or advance its interests.

An international order based on cooperation, dialogue and harmony can be constructed only on the basis of the renunciation of the use or threat of use of force in international relations, and of its corollary, namely, general and complete disarmament. A peaceful and stable order based on the rule of law, not on force, cannot include military superiority and the resurgence of the concept of a just war.

Disarmament and security cannot be dissociated from the renunciation of the use of force. They require that the conduct of States be consistent with the principles of the Charter and that States strengthen the institutions created by the international community for the maintenance of peace.

Not long ago the United Nations defined security as a condition in which States consider that they run no risk of military attack, political pressure or economic coercion and can pursue without threat their own development and progress. How can we reconcile this definition with strategic doctrines based on threats, with the rebirth of the archaic concept of a just war and with the presumption of rights of interference that are not recognized by international law? The First Committee will have to seek to provide answers to these questions as this century draws to a close.

Mr. Riemaa (Finland): On behalf of the European Union, let me congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. The European Union wishes to assure you of its wholehearted support in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

As we move closer to the next century, the international security environment presents a mix of tremendous opportunities and contemporary challenges. Various ongoing efforts in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation further build up the network of international norms and contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. With that goal in mind, the European Union will continue to actively promote international efforts in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, both regarding weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

This year saw the Ottawa process brought to fruition with the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Convention prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines, and the first meeting of States parties to the Convention in Maputo. The European Union welcomes the signing of, and the accession to, the Convention by an overwhelming number of States, which has led to its entry into force in a very short period of time.

The EU emphasizes the importance of the full and speedy implementation of the Ottawa Convention, including the reporting obligations and the deadlines laid down in the Convention as to the destruction of antipersonnel mines in mined areas and in stockpiles, as well as assistance to mine victims. Moreover, the EU calls upon all States to combine their efforts in order to achieve the total elimination of anti-personnel mines worldwide. In this context, the importance of the opportunity the Convention offers for States Signatories to provisionally apply its provisions pending its entry into force should be stressed. The EU and its member States will actively participate in the programme of inter-sessional work adopted at the first meeting of the States Parties. The EU has carried out a number of démarches stressing that the further production of anti-personnel landmines can no longer be justified and urging anti-personnel-landmine-producing countries to strictly refrain from exporting these weapons.

The EU remains seriously concerned about the misery that anti-personnel mines continue to cause to civilian populations, and is committed to participating in international efforts to eliminate these weapons and to put an end to the humanitarian problem caused by them. The EU participation is based on the Joint Action adopted on the eve of the Ottawa Conference in 1997, which also sets out the framework for specific actions and for financial contributions by the EU to demining activities.

The EU is the world's major donor in the areas of demining, assistance to victims and other landmine-related activities. From 1993 to 1997, the EU contributed approximately 135 million euros to demining and to assistance to victims. This amount does not include individual contributions by EU member States. In 1998, total funding by the European Commission and member States in landmine-related activities amounted to approximately 103 million euros. While taking due account of humanitarian concerns, the EU will focus its financial and technical assistance on States Parties and on Signatories which fully observe in practice the principles and objectives of the Ottawa Convention.

The EU believes that, in order to allocate and use more efficiently the resources made available in the fight against anti-personnel mines, improved international coordination of mine action is essential. The EU supports the central coordinating role of the United Nations through the United Nations Mine Action Service. The EU underlines the fact that the ultimate responsibility for mine action rests with the national authorities of the country afflicted, and it consequently places particular emphasis on assisting the establishment of competent national structures and operational demining capabilities. In that regard, on 9 November 1998 the EU adopted a decision to carry out a specific action in the field of demining in Croatia, and requested the Western European Union to implement it. The mission focuses on providing advice, technical expertise and training support to the Croatian Mine Action Centre.

The European Union looks forward to the first annual conference of the States parties to amended Protocol II to Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. It is important that States parties submit the required national reports prior to the conference, and we also

encourage the States signatories to do so on a voluntary basis. The EU calls upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and to the Protocols attached thereto, and in particular to amended Protocol II, on landmines, and Protocol IV, on blinding laser weapons.

Another area of great concern in terms of human security is the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. On 17 December 1998, the EU adopted a Joint Action that draws up a framework for a comprehensive approach to the small arms issue, covering both preventive and reactive measures to tackle the small arms problem. The Joint Action aims at building consensus in the appropriate regional and international forums on necessary principles and measures as the basis for incremental regional approaches to the problem and, where appropriate, for global international instruments on small arms. It entails specific actions by the EU through financial and technical assistance to programmes and projects related to small arms problems.

The EU is of the view that the international conference on small arms to be convened no later than 2001, should be the main focal point in efforts to combat the problem of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. Such a conference should address the issue in a comprehensive manner. The EU will approach the subsequent preparations for the conference with the objectives of reaching meaningful and substantive results — either guidelines or a legally binding instrument — and of drawing up a strong programme of action for international cooperation on small arms. As this issue will be one of the prime questions for this year's First Committee session, we call on all States to join this effort.

As part of the overall approach to alleviating the small arms problem, on 10 May 1999 the EU Council adopted a decision on the EU's contribution of up to 500,000 euros towards the collection and destruction of weapons in Albania in support of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme pilot project for weapons in exchange for development in the Gramsh district of Albania. The project was initiated by the Group of Interested Member States and calls for the assistance of the international community in creating incentives for a turn-in programme of weapons held by large parts of the civilian population in Albania.

The EU is committed to considering small arms issues in every aspect of its development cooperation, as decided by the EU Development Council on 21 May this year. Responsibility in arms transfer policies is essential in addressing the small arms problem. The Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, approved by the EU Council on 8 June 1998, sets high standards for the management of, and encourages restraint in, conventional arms transfers by all EU member States. It strengthens the exchange of relevant information in order to achieve greater transparency in arms transactions. The EU is continuing efforts to further increase the effectiveness of this important measure and invites other countries to align themselves with the principles of the Code of Conduct.

In June 1997, the EU adopted its Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms. With a view to implementing the Programme, various initiatives were taken in Europe and in Africa. In this context, attention was paid to the implementation of the Programme in the EU and in affected countries, as well as to EU assistance to those countries. The Southern Africa Regional Action Programme on Light Arms and Illicit Arms Trafficking was endorsed at the ministerial conference of the EU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held in November 1998.

The EU underlines the importance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms not only as a global confidence-building measure to support stability and security, but also as a measure encouraging regional efforts aimed at greater transparency. The value of the Register will of course be increased by as wide a participation as possible. The European Union calls on all States to submit timely returns concerning their imports and exports to the Register, including, with a view to further increasing transparency and strengthening the value of the Register, information on military holdings and procurement through national production. The inclusion of such data will render the United Nations Register more complete and useful. Submission of a nil report, in cases where no arms transfers have taken place, also contributes to transparency. The EU hopes that the group of governmental experts to be convened in 2000 will further strengthen the Register. In this context, the EU also welcomes the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Arms Acquisitions.

Developments in Europe have a considerable impact on the stability of the entire international system. The crisis in Kosovo, more clearly than anything else, is an international challenge, not just a regional problem. The United Nations and its Member States from different parts of the world are making an invaluable contribution to the Kosovo settlement. The peace process in Kosovo has to be underpinned by long-term solutions for the Balkans region.

The EU and other participants are preparing a programme for the implementation of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, to which they committed themselves at the highest level in Sarajevo at the end of July.

We Europeans must be able to bear the main responsibility for events in our own continent. In this regard, it is of crucial importance that the EU will develop its capacity to take decisions and to act in the field of conflict prevention and crisis management as defined in the Treaty on European Union: the Petersburg tasks. In doing so, the EU will increase its ability to contribute to international peace and security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The EU recognizes the central importance of the contribution of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in ensuring European security and, as it assumes a more effective role in conflict prevention and crisis management, the importance of developing effective mutual consultation, cooperation and transparency between the EU and NATO.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is the only European organization that includes all countries from the Atlantic Ocean to Central Asia. The OSCE is a forum for setting norms and principles for States in our region and is also an actor in preventive diplomacy and crisis management. The OSCE principle that every country has the right to choose its own security arrangements is of central importance for common security in the Euro-Atlantic area. In preparing for a successful OSCE summit to be held in Istanbul in November, the EU is working towards the adoption of a new European security charter.

The EU continues to believe that the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) is one of the cornerstones of security and stability in Europe. The EU hopes that an amended CFE Treaty, adapted to the new security realities of Europe, will be signed at the Istanbul summit. The EU also emphasizes the importance of the 1994 Vienna Document for security in Europe.

The risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery poses a major challenge. The European Union therefore calls for a continuing commitment on the part of the international community in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. For the European Union, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation of the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. In this spirit, we support and promote the implementation of the objectives laid down in the Treaty and the decisions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The NPT has already achieved a very high degree of universality, paralleled by few other international agreements. Universal adherence to the NPT remains an essential objective for us. The EU repeats its urgent call on those four States that have not yet done so to join the rest of the international community and accede to the NPT without further delay.

The EU was satisfied that in finalizing all procedural preparations, including the establishment of main committees and the request for background documentation, the Preparatory Committee succeeded at its third session in clearing the way for the 2000 Review Conference. The EU regrets that the Preparatory Committee was not able to agree on substantive recommendations to the Review Conference. However, important groundwork was laid during the substantive preparations for the Review Conference. The EU, for its part, will continue to contribute positively to the NPT process with a view to a successful outcome at the Review Conference and to furthering nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The ratification of the START II Treaty by Russia and the beginning of negotiations on START III, the commencement of fissile material cut-off negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament, and movement towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are essential elements to that end. The EU stresses the importance of making rapid progress in all of these areas.

One of the measures called for in the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was successfully concluded in 1996. This key instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has been signed by the impressive number of 152 States. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay, especially those on the list of 44 States whose adherence is required for the Treaty to enter into force, including China, Russia and the United States.

All the EU member States on the list of the 44 States whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force, including the two nuclear-weapon States, France and the United Kingdom, have ratified the CTBT.

The EU has been active in promoting the early entry into force of this Treaty and its universality. The EU

established, on 29 July 1999, a Common Position to pursue these objectives. The Conference held under article XIV of CTBT in Vienna last week renewed the determination of States ratifiers and signatories to work for universal ratification of the Treaty and its early entry into force. The EU underlines its full support for the efforts of the Preparatory Commission of the CTBT Organization to establish the Treaty's verification regime in a timely and effective manner.

We expected that the CTBT, even before its entry into force, would mark the definitive end for all time of nuclear-test explosions. This expectation suffered a serious blow with the nuclear tests of India and Pakistan last year. The international reactions that followed the tests sent a clear message that the time of nuclear-test explosions must now be over. We reiterate our call to India and Pakistan to sign and ratify the CTBT, just as we call on all other States to do. Furthermore, we urge these two countries also to take the other steps called for in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998). There is an urgent need to take measures to prevent the escalation of an arms race in southern Asia. In April this year, India and Pakistan carried out tests with ballistic missiles, which had negative consequences for the security situation in the area. We call on both countries to exercise restraint and to refrain from further development of ballistic missiles and from deployment of nuclear weapons or missiles.

The next internationally agreed step on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda after the CTBT is the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear-weapon purposes. Such negotiations are long overdue. In 1995, four years ago, the Conference on Disarmament agreed on a mandate for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In August 1998, the reaffirmation of the mandate and the establishment of an ad hoc committee finally seemed to open the way. Unfortunately, these negotiations have been stalled this year, due to differences between members of the Conference on other agenda items, which have, to our great disappointment, prevented agreement on a work programme. This failure to address an issue which is of vital importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation seriously undermines the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament and endangers the implementation of the NPT programme of action.

While regretting the lack of progress at the Conference on Disarmament on substantive issues, the European Union welcomes the decision of the Conference in August 1999 to expand its membership with five new members as a step forward in the ongoing process of the expansion of the membership of the Conference. We hope that this will contribute to the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament and will help it to resume concrete work. The EU considers it necessary to reappoint a special coordinator at the beginning of the 2000 session to continue consultations on further expansion of the Conference. The EU will continue to support actively the candidature of its four member States and the four associated countries that have applied for admission to the Conference on Disarmament.

The EU member States all agree that systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament, as set out in the 1995 decision on principles and objectives, are essential if we are to make progress towards our common goal: the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Earlier this decade, significant progress was made through both unilateral and bilateral efforts towards the reduction of nuclear arsenals. The agreements reached in this area must now be fully implemented and followed up with negotiations on further reductions complemented with transparency and confidence-building measures.

The EU deplores the fact that the START II Treaty, which was signed in 1993, has still not entered into force. The Union calls upon the Russian Federation and the United States to take all necessary steps to bring the Treaty into force without further delay. The EU welcomes the United States-Russian statement of 20 June, in which both States agreed to begin discussions on START III. The EU hopes that these discussions will enable the rapid conclusion of negotiations on a START III treaty on further deep reductions in nuclear arsenals. The European Union also supports their consideration of transparency measures for short-range nuclear forces in the framework of their START III negotiations.

Nuclear disarmament is, indeed, also a matter of legitimate interest and concern to the entire international community. Joint efforts and cooperation have always been the most promising way to reach a common goal. The European Union welcomes efforts to advance the consideration of agenda item 1 of the Conference on Disarmament. The European Union hopes that the proposal to set up an ad hoc working group to study ways and means of establishing within the Conference on Disarmament an exchange of information and views on

endeavours towards nuclear disarmament will be helpful in this connection.

The European Union welcomed the adoption by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of a Model Protocol additional to existing safeguards agreements. The measures contained in the Model Protocol, once implemented, will lead to a substantial strengthening of the effectiveness and improvement of the IAEA safeguards system and increase its ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities. The European Union considers that a speedy and comprehensive implementation of the Model Protocol is a crucial contribution towards nuclear non-proliferation and to global peace and security. The European Union and its member States have concluded with the IAEA the three Additional Protocols to the three relevant safeguards agreements, one of which covers the 13 non-nuclear-weapon States in the EU, and one each for the United Kingdom and France. We will make every effort to conclude our ratification by the time of the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000. The Union calls on all States having safeguards agreements with the IAEA to conclude and to implement Additional Protocols to these agreements as soon as possible on the basis of the Model Protocol and to treat this matter with the necessary priority.

One issue of particular concern to the EU is the lack of progress in the implementation of safeguards in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In this context, the EU calls again upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to adhere to the resolution adopted at the forty-third session of the General Conference of the IAEA and to comply fully with its safeguards agreement. The EU also urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cooperate fully with the IAEA in the implementation of that safeguards agreement. The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from developing missile systems and flight testing, which would undermine stability in the Korean peninsula. The EU is equally concerned about reported exports of missiles and missile technology by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to unstable and volatile regions of the world.

The EU reiterates its call for the early implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 687 (1991), 707 (1991) and 715 (1991). The IAEA and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) have been unable to carry out inspections in Iraq since December last year. As a result, the IAEA and UNSCOM have not been able to provide any assurance pursuant to the mandate entrusted to them by the Security Council resolutions. The EU deeply regrets this situation and is awaiting the results of the consultations of the Security Council on the basis of the reports prepared by the panels established by the Security Council in January 1999, one of which was entrusted with making recommendations on how to re-establish an effective disarmament and ongoing monitoring-and-verification regime in Iraq, taking into account relevant Security Council resolutions.

The European Union believes that nuclear-weapon-free zones, established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, are important complementary instruments to the NPT. As reaffirmed in the principles and objectives of 1995, the establishment and international recognition of such zones enhance both regional and global peace and security. The EU welcomes the adoption of guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones by the Disarmament Commission at this year's session. We look forward to the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty in Africa. We also hope for a successful conclusion of discussions between States parties to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and nuclear-weapon States, in order to allow for the accession of the latter to the Protocol to that Treaty. We welcome the progress made towards establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The EU continues to support efforts to establish a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East. We call on all States in that region which have not yet done so to accede to the NPT as well as to the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions.

The European Union underlines the importance of effective export-control measures in achieving non-proliferation objectives. It is essential that exporting States assume their responsibilities and take measures to ensure that exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to an appropriate system of surveillance and control. An efficient system of export controls provides confidence that goods, technology and materials will be used only for peaceful purposes and thereby facilitates cooperation in these areas of technological development. The EU remains convinced that transparency in export-control regimes should be promoted within a framework of dialogue and cooperation and supports the transparency activities of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

The European Union considers the Chemical Weapons Convention a landmark in the disarmament process. Since its entry into force in 1997, the world has moved closer towards the aim of abolishing a whole class of weapons of

mass destruction and eliminating the existing stocks of chemical weapons and their related production facilities. This contributes to removing real and continuing threats to international peace as well as to global and regional stability. However, the EU is concerned that a considerable number of signatories have yet to ratify the Convention and that a significant number of countries have still neither signed nor ratified the Convention. It is imperative that our joint efforts to achieve universality continue. The EU appeals to States not parties to the Convention to ratify or accede to it without further delay.

The EU also calls on all States parties to fulfil without delay their obligations in relation to the declarations required by the Convention, as well as their other obligations under the Convention. Certainly, full implementation of as complex a convention as the Chemical Weapons Convention is not an easy task. The relevant domestic legislation of all States parties must fully meet the requirements of the Convention. The EU member States are ready to assist by providing the EU's available expertise to the fullest possible extent to any State party requesting it. This assistance would complement the bilateral assistance provided for this purpose by several EU member States.

The EU reaffirms the high priority it gives to the reinforcement of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The Convention will be effectively strengthened by the early and successful conclusion of the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group for the Convention on a legally binding protocol establishing a verification and compliance regime. The EU continues to work for the successful conclusion of the negotiations so that the protocol can be adopted in the year 2000. The progress made at the last round of negotiations indicates that this objective can be attained. The EU supports efforts to organize the work of the Ad Hoc Group in the first half of the year 2000 so as to allow the protocol to be adopted by a Special Conference as soon as possible before the Fifth Review Conference, and calls upon all States parties to support these efforts.

The EU, in line with its active role in the Ad Hoc Group negotiations, has reaffirmed its continuous commitment by defining, on 17 May 1999, a Common Position relating to progress towards a legally binding protocol and intensification of work in the Ad Hoc Group by the end of 1999. The EU Common Position sets out measures or guiding principles that are essential elements of the protocol to the Convention. These include mandatory declarations and their effective follow-up in the form of visits; provisions for rapid and effective investigations; a cost-effective and independent organization for the implementation of the protocol; and provisions for specific measures in the context of article VII of the protocol, in order to further international cooperation and exchanges in the field of biotechnology. The adoption of the protocol, establishing a verification and compliance regime for the Biological Weapons Convention next year, would add to the impressive series of disarmament achievements of the past decade. These include the START Treaties, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the amended landmine Protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Ottawa Convention, the strengthening of the IAEA safeguards and progress with several nuclear-weapon-free zones. The EU hopes that the disarmament and non-proliferation objectives will be further served through active multilateral efforts, including this First Committee meeting of the General Assembly, so that full use is made of available opportunities to contribute to peace and stability in today's world.

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): First allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship. It is good to see a southern-hemisphere country and a Pacific partner leading our deliberations.

It is customary in this body to review the achievements of the previous year and to look forward to opportunities for further progress in arms control and disarmament. This year, however, the overwhelming conclusion must be one of disappointment and frustration. For those of us who attach the highest importance to disarmament, progress overall has been mixed and, at best, meagre.

Our multilateral machinery seems incapable right now of delivering results at a pace that is consistent with public expectations, and there appear to be signs of fatigue on the bilateral and unilateral fronts as well. Some are arguing that the international security fabric may be unravelling. We would not go that far, but clearly there is a requirement across the board to renew our determination to deliver.

When we look at the balance sheet, it would be stretching the imagination to describe it in positive or optimistic terms. Universality of many treaties is not in prospect. An important cornerstone of strategic stability is being questioned. The nuclear non-proliferation norm has been challenged. Nuclear weapons-capable States remain outside the scope of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Worse, there is now extremely

worrying talk about the pursuit of a minimum credible nuclear-deterrent policy in South Asia.

When we pause to look at the disarmament landscape, we are struck by the significant amount of unfinished business on all fronts. The inventory is depressingly long. Yet another year has gone by without ratification of START II; addressing the issue in this Committee is increasingly becoming a ritualistic endeavour. Despite the efforts in Vienna last week at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), an event that in the best of worlds would not have needed to take place, entry into force of this hugely important Treaty is not yet in prospect. I wish to record in this context that New Zealand regards ratification of this Treaty by all the 44 States required to do so, including the United States, the Russian Federation and China, as being extremely important. This Treaty is effectively verifiable. It is essential to the international non-proliferation regime and fundamental to the process of nuclear disarmament.

Those of us who have implemented the strengthened International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards constitute too small a club of only five countries and there are some amongst us who have yet to even sign on to the comprehensive safeguards agreements and are thus in breach of their NPT obligations. Ratification of the Protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zones is far from complete. While negotiations on the biological weapons protocol are now in the end-game phase, there is a need for a further political push to ensure that they are completed without delay.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is not yet universal in all regions. While we welcome the efforts of some nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate transparency in their holdings, others have yet to embark on this process. International attention to the escalation of small arms is increasing, thankfully, but much more needs to be done. Universalization of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is no less an imperative. Perhaps the most conspicuous disappointment, however, must be the continuing failure of the Conference on Disarmament to engage in substantial negotiations again this year.

Where does this leave us? The Tokyo Forum recently offered the view that, unless concerted action is taken, and taken soon, non-proliferation and disarmament treaties could become hollow instruments. This is a very sobering conclusion. Frustrating though the current situation might be, New Zealand does not consider that we are about to enter some kind of disarmament meltdown. Prophesies like that are too often prone to become self-fulfilling and they only play into the hands of those who take comfort from inaction. But there is no doubt that the pace of the global disarmament effort overall is faltering. In some cases, it has stalled altogether. We must channel and redirect any complacency and frustration back into productive engagement.

We regret very much that efforts to reach a consensus on the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work this year failed. The prospects for agreement remain tantalizingly close and we know that the current Australian presidency of the Conference will spare no effort in that process.

New Zealand does not consider, as some are claiming, that the Conference on Disarmament is in crisis or should be suspended, but we could reach that point if there is continuing lack of serious engagement in Geneva in 2000. It might be convenient, for those who observe the Conference's activities, to lay the blame for this situation at the feet of the institution itself. That would be quite illusory. The responsibility rests squarely with the members of the Conference and, in this process, greater account should be taken of the initiatives this Committee is here to address.

I want to make it clear that New Zealand remains committed to the Conference on Disarmament. We would not dispute that it must negotiate by consensus, but the need to take a serious look at its working procedures, and in particular its now-anachronistic political group structures and ritualistic decision-making machinery, is overdue and compelling. It may be these shortcomings that ultimately determine the credibility of the Conference in the future.

In this context, we welcome the proposal of Chile, which advocates that deliberative bodies, once established in the Conference on Disarmament, should continue to engage from year to year unless a decision is taken to disestablish them. The real world does not operate in tidy calendar packages, nor should the Conference on Disarmament.

One plus this year, however, was agreement to a limited enlargement of its membership. New Zealand actively supported this step from the beginning. We consider, however, that membership of that body should be universal. It makes common sense to ensure the widest

possible participation in a body charged with negotiating instruments designed to attract universal adherence.

Above all, work on a fissile-materials treaty in the Conference must begin without delay early next year. The situation is extraordinary, when over 180 countries agreed this was a priority in 1995, when the principles and objectives of the NPT were adopted; when there have been many resolutions over a period of years in this Committee which have called for work to begin without delay; when the Conference on Disarmament was able to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate in 1998; and, when in this Committee, only last year, another such call was made which enjoyed consensus.

No less a priority next year in the Conference on Disarmament must be the establishment of a credible mechanism to address nuclear disarmament properly. Debate on nuclear issues in the Conference cannot continue to be suffocated. It is not credible to repeatedly endorse the need for nuclear disarmament here in this Committee, in the NPT setting and elsewhere, and not deliberate on it in the Conference. This is nonsensical to the people we are here to represent and it makes little sense in the context of our collective obligations and undertakings. We cannot and will not accept the assertion that the interests of non-nuclear weapon States should be excluded from contributing in a constructive way to the process of nuclear disarmament. Nuclear weapons are multilateral in their reach and in their pernicious devastation, whether we like it or not.

My Government has been aware for some time that however well-intentioned, the Biological Weapons Convention would not deter a determined bio-warfare proliferator. Nor would it be capable of providing an adequate framework for the international community to be properly confident in its prohibitions. If it was, some countries may not have gone to such lengths to pursue bio-warfare activities, nor would other countries have needed to invest in bio-defence.

We have heard various opinions voiced, both officially and unofficially, about the performance of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and its implications for verification of biological weapons activities under this protocol. We recall, for example, the assertion that proper verification is impossible, and we have heard the tenuous extrapolation that negotiation of a compliance protocol is therefore ultimately futile and will not provide any security benefits. We do not agree with that conclusion. In fact, we would have to reject it with respect to the elimination of any weapon. In our view, if there is any lesson to be drawn it is that reliable instruments were clearly lacking at that time to send warning signals to the international community at the appropriate time.

We are under no illusion that the biological weapons protocol under negotiation in Geneva can be a complete shield against biological-weapons proliferators, but it can act as an effective radar, and the more robust the components of the compliance radar, the more durable and more reliable it will be for the protocol's States parties. We need a compliance regime which is adaptable and to the greatest possible extent future-proof. It must be capable of delivering a sufficient degree of confidence internationally. Above all, it must deliver tangible security benefits to all protocol States parties.

We know that the views about the protocol's compliance mechanisms differ. This has prompted us and no doubt others to reflect very carefully on this fundamental element of the protocol. It is in this context that New Zealand welcomes the paper on visits recently tabled by the Non-Aligned Movement in Geneva. We find many elements it contains attractive and compelling. Some elements of the Non-Aligned paper we do not support, however, but we are ready to engage constructively on these important points of substance.

New Zealand has long appreciated also that some States parties who submit themselves to the Biological Weapons Convention obligations in good faith may lack the scientific and technical means to uphold these obligations unaided. Evidence suggests that these problems come not always from a lack of political will, but from a lack of knowledge of what to do. We have been articulating this concern in the negotiations together with Norway, Chile and Brazil, and it is now more widely recognized and is being addressed.

National positions in these protocol negotiations are becoming well known. It is time to move to closure and to complete the protocol as soon as possible. We sense that the compliance imperatives, indeed all elements of the negotiating mandate, can be met and accorded the right balance, that this cannot be at the cost of a weak instrument. We do not want to be told after the event that this protocol is incapable to delivering the requisite security benefits. States parties must therefore assume responsibility for ensuring that it does.

While our immediate focus is on the biological weapons negotiations in Geneva, we should not forget that in The Hague, the world's first multilateral verifiable treaty

banning an entire class of weapons of mass destruction is being implemented. Real progress has been made in bringing to reality the vision of those who drafted the Chemical Weapons Convention. The machinery of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons exists and the world's stockpiles of chemical weapons are being destroyed. We enter the new millennium with the possibility of a world free of chemical weapons within our grasp. But now is not the time for complacency. Some important States parties have yet to fulfil basic Convention obligations. Only through universal membership and full implementation of all its provisions will the Convention's vision be fulfilled and the requisite security benefits delivered.

No less a priority for the international community is action on conventional weapons. Small arms are daily killers, and their continuing proliferation is now a priority we must confront collectively. No region of the world is immune to this threat or its devastating social, economic and political consequences. It is gratifying that international attention is focusing increasingly on the dimensions of the problem and on possible solutions. In this regard, we welcome and support the initiatives on small arms by Japan and South Africa in this Committee.

Clearly a holistic approach to dealing with the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of small arms is the only way to proceed. The problem does not, unfortunately, lend itself to a single international solution. Action will be needed at the national, regional and international levels. We believe also that the way forward must be through incremental initiatives involving mutually reinforcing steps. The international community should now get in behind efforts to deal with this real and pressing problem and translate the widespread concern into concerted action. New Zealand is ready to play its part in this process.

We are delighted that adherence to the Ottawa Convention continues to grow. The task of eliminating landmines remains enormous, and New Zealand continues to be actively involved in demining operations. But universalization of the Convention will not, in our view, be finessed by excursions in partial measures.

A defining moment fast approaching us is the NPT Review Conference. The Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the fundamental cornerstone of the non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament regime. The challenges facing it are formidable, but it remains as indispensable as ever. The enhanced review process on which we embarked in 1995 is still evolving. At this year's third and final session of the preparatory committee, there was a respectable outcome in terms of preparing for the 2000 Review Conference. Next year's Review Conference will be the moment of truth when hard decisions will be needed in addressing accountability. We shall have to ensure in 2000 that the legitimate expectations of its members are not suppressed. In particular, there can be no stepping back from the objective and the obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons. That is why New Zealand has joined Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, Sweden and South Africa in the new agenda coalition. We have done so because we believe there must be a new political impetus given to the nuclear disarmament process. We shall explain our approach in tabling the new agenda resolution to this Committee in a separate statement.

One of the realities we face is that the political disarmament agenda is out of step with public expectations. Changing times have heightened expectations that real progress can continue to be made. The responsibility rests with every member of the United Nations family to redress this imbalance.

New Zealand has cared deeply about the need for disarmament and the imperative of pushing the agenda forward. We have participated in more than enough international conflicts to have a real appreciation of what is at stake if we fail. Indeed, there have been few conflicts this century where New Zealand has not played its part in the collective effort. The towns and villages of New Zealand contain far too many memorials to those who paid the ultimate price overseas with their lives.

We do not want to see that happen in the new millennium. All of us in this Committee must demonstrate more leadership, more ownership and more determination on disarmament. Introspection, procrastination and hand-wringing on the sidelines will not do.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Mr. Chairman, the Bangladesh delegation assures you of its fullest cooperation as you steer the work of this important Committee. We are confident that under your skilful leadership, our deliberations will be fruitful.

We also express our thanks and appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive presentation covering major issues before this Committee. Here I would like to commend him for the important initiatives and reorganization undertaken by his

Department since its establishment last year under his leadership.

As we participate in this year's general debate in the First Committee, let me reiterate that Bangladesh's commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament is unequivocal. This commitment flows from our constitutional obligation. Our adherence to major disarmament treaties stems from that. To this end, we have particularly joined in all efforts aimed at the effective elimination of all nuclear weapons. As an active member of the Conference on Disarmament, Bangladesh remains committed to contributing to discussions, deliberations and substantive negotiations on the whole range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

In his report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1), the Secretary-General observed that during the past year existing disarmament agreements were threatened by a number of developments which are likely not only to undermine global security but also to cause an increase in global military expenditures. We are dismayed when the Secretary-General goes on to say that the disarmament machinery in the United Nations has not been fully utilized since we met in this Committee last year, and that no consensus was reached on the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which could set universal goals for the immediate future.

The Disarmament Commission failed, for the third successive year, to agree on a programme of work and to reach consensus on holding a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. The cap on nuclear proliferation remains unshielded, and there are suggestions that the number of threshold States could potentially be on the rise. The controversy over vertical proliferation has also been accentuated by sub-critical tests.

There is nevertheless a perceptible, and indeed expanding, international consensus that favours the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The call made in The Hague Appeal for Peace for the delegitimization of war reflects the conscience of humankind. The consensus adoption by the General Assembly on the closing day of its fifty-third session, last month, of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, gives a significant boost to our efforts.

The agreement finally reached on the starting of negotiations on a fissile materials cut-off treaty is also a step forward, as is the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on Anti-personnel Mines. It is now of utmost importance that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), together with its agreed objectives, become universally accepted.

We urge all nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-capable States in all regions of the world to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's assertion that the systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination, will remain one of the priority tasks of the international community.

In the field of conventional arms, attention has remained focused on transparency in armaments. We commend the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Here I would like to inform the Committee that Bangladesh has already provided necessary information for inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and that it will continue to do so in future.

The open sale and easy availability of small arms is a matter for serious concern. It is the abundant and ready supply of easy-to-use tools of conflict and weapons of death and disability that are responsible for an estimated 90 per cent of all conflict-related deaths and injuries, of which, shockingly, 80 per cent are visited upon women and children. Illicit international trafficking and transfer of small arms and their accumulation in many countries constitute a serious threat to their populations and to national and regional security. This is a major factor contributing to the destabilization of States. The problem has been exacerbated by the absence of global norms or standards for reduction of such accumulation, transfer and trafficking. The holding next year in Switzerland of an international conference on all aspects of the illicit small arms trade could be an important step towards the long-felt need of building up a global consensus on this issue as a matter of utmost importance and urgency. Here my delegation would like to record its appreciation of the important work done by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. Bangladesh would support action by this Committee to implement the major recommendations articulated by that Group.

Since its adoption, efforts to promote entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty have continued, and a conference to consider the issue has just concluded in Vienna. It is critical that the three nuclear-weapon States that have not yet ratified the Treaty, as well as those States whose ratification is required for its entry

into force, deposit their instruments promptly. As the Secretary-General observed in his report on the Work of the Organization, the path to the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will be smoother if there has been tangible progress in this and other areas of nuclear disarmament.

Bangladesh, which signed the CTBT on 24 October 1996, has just taken a decision in principle to ratify the Treaty. Bangladesh's major concern has been, and continues to be, the heavy financial obligations that would devolve on it and on other least developed countries on account of the implementation of the CTBT, comprising the expenses of its Preparatory Commission, of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) and of the verification regime, including the International Monitoring System of the CTBT and the Technical Secretariat. As Coordinator of the least developed countries, Bangladesh has voiced its concern on this matter since the first meeting of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission in New York. We have done so too at the recent Vienna meeting. We need to find a mechanism which would relieve the least developed countries of this heavy burden without jeopardizing the implementation of the Treaty.

As a party to the Biological Weapons Convention, Bangladesh is fully aware of its responsibilities and takes its obligations seriously. By not having evolved, acquired or stockpiled biological weapons, Bangladesh is in full accord with the provisions of the Convention. Full adherence to the Convention by all States would be a guarantee in ensuring effective elimination of biological weapons. There is therefore a clear need for charting a credible compliance regime. In this context, Bangladesh welcomes the ongoing work of the ad hoc group entrusted to negotiate a protocol to strengthen the Convention by developing a verification and compliance mechanism. It was in this spirit that Bangladesh joined in sponsoring the Declaration adopted at the informal Ministerial Meeting held on the sidelines of the fifty-third session of the Assembly on the initiative of Australia. We hope that the Declaration would provide the political impetus to the process of agreement on a protocol on strengthening the Convention.

As for the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it, and, having no chemical weapons programmes or facilities, we ratified the Convention in April 1997. But our ratification would have little meaning unless the major chemical weapons countries joined it. We underscore the necessity of universal adherence to the Convention and call upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention without delay. We also underline the importance of the early initiation of activities under all relevant provisions of the Convention by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

In today's world, regional disarmament presents newer challenges. The continued arms race is a formidable source of threat to security and is draining considerable resources of many countries at the expense of investment in development. It is our belief that while regional confidence-building measures can go a long way, regional disarmament, to be truly effective, would require understanding at the global level through sincere and meaningful gestures from major Powers.

In this context, we attach considerable importance to the activities of the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament. My delegation has always urged that these centres, including the one for Asia and the Pacific, be given sufficient support and resources in order for them to be more active in promoting dialogue on disarmament issues in the regional and sub-regional context.

As regards the Centre for Asia and the Pacific, Bangladesh continues to remain disappointed to see that despite our repeated requests the Centre is not operating from its location in Kathmandu and is being run from New York. There is no reason for the Centre to be run from New York when it has been established under an Assembly resolution to be based in Kathmandu and operate from there. The two other regional centres, for Africa and Latin America, are operating from their respective regions and their Directors are also stationed there.

We are surprised that despite the request in Assembly resolution 49/76D adopted and its reiteration in resolution 53/78B, adopted last year, the Secretary General's report on the Centre does not provide any positive indication about moving it to Kathmandu. The argument of financial constraint does not seem plausible. There is no mention in the report about the size of the fund required. We would like to know from Under-Secretary- General Dhanapala the budgetary requirement for the Centre to operate from Kathmandu. We would also like to know whether funding is the only factor standing in the way of the Centre being operated from the region.

In closing, may I say that disarmament should not be seen as an end in itself. The noble motivation of disarmament — to save humanity from the scourge of war

and destruction — should also inspire us to elevate the majority of human beings from the abyss of poverty and underdevelopment. The savings from even a small cut in military expenditure by the major Powers can contribute substantially to the development efforts of the developing countries. Such voluntary cuts in expenditure on arms can raise the dividends for investing in improving the quality of life of the people.

With the East-West conflict a matter of the past, it is our earnest expectation that multilateral disarmament would take on a more active course. We believe that mutually acceptable solutions can be found even to seemingly complex problems if requisite political will is brought to the negotiating table by the parties concerned. In our endeavour to reach a world free of weapons of mass destruction, we must not relent in our efforts towards general and complete nuclear disarmament. This is the ultimate goal we need to realize in order to safeguard the lives of present and subsequent generations, and we must all pursue it with determination and sincerity.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) *(spoke in French):* Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to assure you of the full support of my delegation, which is especially pleased about your appointment. We recall that it was the representative of Chile who coordinated the group of States, including Switzerland, who joined the Conference on Disarmament in 1996.

My delegation, like many others, notes that the negotiations on disarmament and nuclear arms control have seriously slowed down at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. The prolonged deadlock in these negotiations risks undermining international security and stability. It could also weaken the international institutions and organizations active in this field. In order to counter these worrying developments, it will be necessary to carry out an in-depth evaluation of the current situation and to review the priorities.

Concerning the bilateral negotiations on reducing nuclear weapon stocks, the START II Treaty, signed by the United States and the Russian Federation, has still not come into force. Although these two countries have launched new discussions on the future of their nuclear forces and are pursuing a process of unilateral reduction of their strategic weapons arsenals, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 on limiting anti-missile systems seems to have become a stumbling block for their future negotiations. My Government asks these two States to find agreement rapidly on this issue with a view to opening negotiations on new reductions within the framework of a START III disarmament agreement.

Regarding multilateral efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament, the earliest entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one urgently needed step. The first conference of the States parties to the Treaty was concluded in Vienna a few days ago. Although implementation of the Treaty is in progress, obstacles to its entry into force remain as long as States with a nuclear capacity have not yet signed it or are delaying depositing their instruments of ratification. Switzerland calls upon States to adhere to the CTBT as soon as possible.

The annual session of the Conference on Disarmament came to an end without even adopting a programme of work. The Conference was also not able to pursue the negotiations begun in 1998 on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for military use, the so-called cut-off treaty. Without such a treaty it will be extremely difficult ever to achieve a stable and verifiable balance of all fissile materials destined for military use at lowest levels. This balance is necessary in order to achieve our common objective of a complete, verifiable and universal elimination of all nuclear weapons. It will take a redoubling of efforts to relaunch the negotiations on the cut-off treaty before the beginning of the next session. My delegation has already assured the current President, Ambassador Leslie Luck, as well as his successor, Ambassador Harald Kreid, of its full support in the consultation process.

The next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which will take place in this city next year, is very closely linked with progress in the field of multilateral nuclear disarmament. There can therefore be no doubt that the disarmament objectives of the review process set in motion in 1995 — as modest as they were — have not yet been achieved. We have to admit that the preparatory process for the Review Conference has produced rather mixed results. The time between now and the beginning of the Conference should therefore be used to review our priorities.

In this regard, it is imperative to pursue unrelentingly a multilateral approach to nuclear disarmament, as defined in 1995, with a view to complete implementation of the document on principles and objectives for nuclear

non-proliferation and disarmament". If that goal is attained, the Non-Proliferation Treaty will remain a cornerstone of the international security system and will allow the process of progressive reduction and elimination of nuclear arms to go ahead, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty.

We are, however, pleased to note that successful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the achievements of the States that have declared their chemical weapons stocks and production facilities for destruction, in compliance with the Convention. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for its commitment to ensuring respect for the Convention by carrying out inspections of both military and civilian facilities. At the same time, we would like to encourage those States that for different reasons have until now declined to sign the Convention to do so as soon as possible in order to achieve the common objective of a world without chemical weapons.

With regard to biological weapons, it is of the utmost importance that the negotiations to strengthen the 1972 Convention on banning biological weapons be concluded as early as possible in order to improve its implementation, enhance its efficiency and promote universal adherence to it. There is still a lot to be done to conclude the Ad Hoc Group negotiations before the Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties in 2001. My country hopes that by the end of the year significant progress will have been made. In this respect, Switzerland supports the work of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group, Ambassador Tibor Toth, who expects to conclude these negotiations next year.

As you know, Switzerland has proposed to host in Geneva the headquarters of the future organization for the prohibition of biological weapons. Swiss authorities will take all the necessary measures to ensure the best possible conditions for the establishment of the new organization in Geneva as soon as it wishes to set up a permanent secretariat. We consider that the city provides an environment favourable to the success of this organization and convenient for the States parties. Geneva is already home to numerous organizations and bodies engaged in the fields of activity of the future organization, such as the World Health Organization, as well as to the permanent missions of over 140 States.

Having completed an outline of the issues concerning weapons of mass destruction, I would now like to turn my attention to the problem of proliferation of so-called conventional arms. The excessive accumulation and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons not only threaten peace and security in many regions of the world, but also endanger the socio-economic development of many States. Switzerland is actively participating in international efforts in this field and recommends that measures be introduced to reduce the numbers of these weapons and prevent further proliferation.

With regard to global efforts for the non-proliferation of small arms, Switzerland is in the process of developing universally applicable marking technique with the active cooperation of the arms industry. The workshop organized this year in Geneva by Switzerland clearly demonstrated that it is possible to mark weapons without incurring excessive extra costs. A second seminar, jointly organized by Switzerland and Germany in Baden last June, confirmed the willingness of the industry to join in our efforts.

The international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects that is to be held in the year 2001 on the basis of the General Assembly resolution 53/77 E, should be an opportunity to consolidate international efforts in the area of light weapons. In particular, these efforts should include those concerning marking, transparency and traceability. Switzerland is willing to host this conference in Geneva if the General Assembly so decides, and welcomes the initiatives taken for its preparation. For this purpose, an international seminar on the monitoring and control of small-arms flows will take place in Geneva in November.

Since the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction entered into force on 1 March, the process of implementing it has been under way. One important step was accomplished with the First Meeting of the States Parties last May in Maputo. In recognition of such major objectives as demining, the universality of the Convention and assistance to victims, particular importance has been given to cooperation between Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Switzerland is honoured to be able to host the Second Conference of the States parties in Geneva next year. Furthermore, Geneva was chosen as the location for the intercessional process of the five Standing Committees of Experts, which will bring together world-renowned specialists in this field. The five Committees, whose work is currently in progress, have been able to benefit from the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

The Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines is the only international instrument that currently offers a realistic prospect for coordinating resources at the global level for providing effective, adequate and significant assistance to mine victims and those countries affected by this scourge. On this subject, my country, acting in concert with various international organizations and non-governmental organizations, is in the process of finalizing an integrated approach to aiding mine victims.

The other important instrument in this field is the amended Protocol II, which is annexed to the Convention on Prohibitions and Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons. Although this Protocol bans neither the production nor the possession of mines, it makes a major contribution to regulating the use of landmines, booby traps and other explosive devices designed to kill, wound or cause damage. Amended Protocol II entered into force last year, and the first conference of the States parties will be held from 15 to 17 December this year. Switzerland invites those States that have not yet done so to ratify amended Protocol II as soon as possible.

Preparations for the review conference of that Convention in the year 2001 will begin in the next few months. Switzerland will renew its support by making a substantive contribution to this process. After the two workshops on the traumatic effects of small arms, Switzerland is preparing a third seminar next spring on the military appropriateness of some types of small-arms ammunition.

In assessing the progress made in disarmament and arms control this year, we note that the United Nations plays a key role in several areas of multilateral negotiations, including nuclear disarmament, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and landmines. My country believes that the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament is an indispensable component of international security and stability. I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Secretary-General; the Director of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala; and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Vladimir Petrovsky, and his team of the support and full cooperation of the Government of Switzerland.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Please accept my delegation's congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during this session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and your Bureau lead the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

Many delegations will look back at 1998 and 1999 and regret that non-proliferation, disarmament and international security issues have had few successes. We bemoan the lost opportunities that were in our grasp but were relinquished. If we are honest with ourselves, we must concede that the inability of multilateral forums and the international community to substantively address some of the most central issues of our day reflects a deepening crisis in international relations, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control.

At the end of the cold war, the international community had high expectations that we were, at the close of the millennium, entering a new period in which our differences would be less accentuated and we would seek common ground for the improvement of international stability, peace and security. In the short space of a decade these lofty aspirations were severely eroded. The conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and, shortly thereafter, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty boosted our confidence that the great Power rivalry of the past was subsiding, that the East-West divide had disappeared and that the international security situation was much improved.

In the last decade nuclear-weapon reductions were achieved unilaterally, bilaterally and through the START process. Although the number of strategic nuclear weapons has been halved to approximately 30,000, there are still some 25,000 tactical nuclear weapons remaining in arsenals, and greater reliance is being attached to them. Momentum, however, is waning as the chances of START II's ratification remain elusive and talks to initiate START III, while encouraging, appear to be preliminary and inconclusive.

The nuclear tests in South Asia last year and the release of a draft nuclear doctrine in India this year should have been a wake-up call, especially to the nuclear-weapon States. However, it is with deep concern that we are witnessing new or expanded rationales for the use of nuclear weapons that exacerbates the prospect of their indefinite possession and may lead others to develop similar rationales for acquiring them. Negotiations on a fissile-materials treaty are not able to get under way, and the ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty appears remote. Furthermore, the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems, the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of deployment in outer space and the exacerbation of regional instabilities are adversely affecting the international climate necessary to promote disarmament and strengthen international stability and security.

An international push for progress on all fronts is sorely needed. It is the hope of my delegation that our deliberations in this First Committee will be responsive to positively addressing the core elements required to facilitate action and results in moving our disarmament agenda forward.

Nuclear disarmament is considered by all States to be one of the most important of the disarmament issues facing the international community. Moreover, nuclear disarmament is a concern of the entire international community. A source of concern for South Africa is the continuing refusal to recognize that this is indeed the case. This refusal has led to an inability to have this interest and concern accommodated in such forums as the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the strengthened review process of the NPT. This is despite the fact that South Africa, and many other participants in these meetings, made it clear that the proposals being made would be undertaken without undermining or threatening the nuclear-arms reduction negotiations between the Russian Federation and the United States of America. These negotiations would continue to be of paramount importance for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, as would future negotiations involving the other three nuclear-weapon States.

What is being sought is for the international community, as represented by the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT, to have focused deliberations on the practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. This concern is further exacerbated by the failure of the Preparatory Committees for the NPT Review Conference to address issues of substance. South Africa will continue to pursue its proposals, made throughout the last three Preparatory Committees, when the NPT 2000 Review Conference meets next April. It is also our hope that the Review Conference will be able to successfully review the implementation of the Treaty as well as adopt a forward-looking agenda that will bring us closer to fully addressing the goals of the Treaty. We will work together with all of our NPT partners to achieve this objective, especially in view of the challenges that confront us.

It is a pleasure indeed for South Africa, together with its partners in the coalition for a new agenda, again to present a draft resolution for consideration by the First Committee. The objective of the draft resolution is to refresh the debate on nuclear disarmament and to put forward a realistic agenda for the achievement of nuclear disarmament. It is hoped that the changes proposed to last year's draft resolution will enable the new text to be met with wider approval. There has been a sincere attempt to address the constructive suggestions and criticism received, while at the same time retaining the substance of the draft resolution. It is our expectation that delegations will seriously engage with the substance of the draft resolution and not retreat into vague conceptual notions for reasons of pure political expediency, as was the case with certain delegations last year.

It is also expected that delegations will not cynically question the title of the draft resolution without even attempting to visualize, never mind debate, what should be done in the void that will face us once the present nuclear disarmament agenda, which is rooted in the 1950s, is completed, with the conclusion of a fissile material treaty. Promoting the notion that we cannot consider the future agenda until the completion of the so-called present agenda would, in the view of my delegation, cause an unconscionable waste of valuable time in dealing with an important issue.

The new-agenda proposals continue to identify the middle ground and aim to avoid the trap of inaction created by the maximalist and minimalist positions that have for too long dominated the nuclear disarmament debate. These extreme positions have only delivered further polarization and demonstrated a paucity of results. The new-agenda approach squarely recognizes the challenges facing us. It acknowledges and welcomes the steps which have been taken and which are continuing to be taken. It does not avoid difficult issues, but it does not seek confrontation. Furthermore, it seeks to form the basis for a common approach for the achievement of the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons through existing unilateral and bilateral processes and through complementary and mutually reinforcing steps at the plurilateral and multilateral levels.

I would now like to turn to a number of other important issues which South Africa wishes to highlight and which will be dealt with during the course of our deliberations. The intensification of the work of the Ad Hoc

Group of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, which has clearly been demonstrated by this past year's rather lengthy and intensive work programme, is to be welcomed. South Africa is fully committed to these negotiations and to achieving a protocol that will be truly effective in strengthening the implementation of the Convention and in promoting its universality for all States. The conclusion of the work of the Ad Hoc Group will, however, continue to be dependent on the committed but flexible participation of all States parties to the treaty to deliver a protocol that will be effective and fulfil the objectives established at the 1994 Special Conference of States parties. We remain convinced that the Ad Hoc Group will be able to complete its work within the time-frame agreed to at the most recent treaty Review Conference. It will be imperative to achieve an effective protocol that meets the objectives set for it, not a protocol that merely achieves certain national objectives while also continuing to preserve national minimal positions on the issues.

South Africa remains gravely concerned about the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We are concerned not only about the illicit use of these weapons and their role in fuelling regional conflicts, but also about the negative impact that such weapons have on the socio-economic development and stability of emerging democratic States. South Africa is convinced that an incremental approach based on regional concerns will provide the building blocks for the international community to tackle the problems associated with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Building blocks have been put in place at the United Nations and within the Organization of African Unity, the Southern African Development Community, the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Coordinating Committee, the European Union and the Organization of American States, among other bodies, to ensure that small arms proliferation is properly addressed. The challenge now is to utilize these opportunities and, in preparation for the international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, to come up with practical solutions to the proliferation problem. This would assist in ensuring that the issue is addressed internationally and in individual regions of the world. In this regard, an early decision needs to be taken to enable the preparatory committee to start its preparations for that conference.

South Africa welcomes the report (A/54/258) of the Secretary-General on the progress made towards implementing the recommendations in the 1997 report (A/52/298) on small arms as well as the report of the Study Group on Ammunition and Explosives. These reports contain valuable information and recommendations on how to address the small arms proliferation problem, and they are important reference documents for the preparatory phase of the 2001 international conference.

The conclusion of the mine-ban treaty ranks as one of the most rapid and illustrious achievements in the history of disarmament efforts. The successful outcome in Maputo, Mozambique, of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the treaty set the tone for the practical implementation of the provisions of this important international instrument banning anti-personnel mines. This process will find expression in the work of the Standing Committees of Experts mandated by the First Meeting of the State Parties to further focus the implementation of the treaty. The first of these meetings took place in Geneva, and promising initial progress was made. South Africa, which is co-chairing the committee on the general implementation of the treaty, will take a keen interest in this process and will contribute positively to the work of all the Committees of Experts.

The universalization of the mine-ban treaty is a priority. However, the role that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), in particular its Protocol II on mines, booby-traps and other devices, could play in addressing the difficulties faced by States unable to join the mine-ban treaty at this point in time should be fully explored. This is especially the case with regard to a possible ban, in the context of the CCW, on the transfer of anti-personnel mines.

South Africa remains committed to working in this Committee and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums so as to achieve the common goals of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and of limiting the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence. We will also be expressing our views and positions on the issues not addressed in this statement during the deliberations set out in the work timetable of this Committee.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

In the field of disarmament and international security, Chile has adopted a realistic and pragmatic policy and stands ready to support new approaches. We therefore believe that it is essential for the First Committee to

concentrate on achieving certain objectives that would help to restore the shattered confidence in existing disarmament mechanisms and to define new concepts of international security. In line with that belief, we are of the view that human security is an idea that can renew and enrich our work, since it constitutes a conceptual framework that places man at the centre of our security mechanisms. Indeed, besides underscoring the role of humanitarian law and human rights as fundamental pillars of human development, it also places special emphasis on such issues as the total prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the prevention of illicit trafficking in small arms.

On the question of small arms, we welcome the statement made last September by the President of the Security Council with respect to the recommendation of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, chaired by Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki, that an international conference on small arms should be convened no later than 2001. Topics for consideration by the conference should also include the legal trade in weapons as part of an effort to promote a comprehensive approach that could limit the negative impact of proliferation.

In our region, there is a very clear commitment to move forward in the fight against the manufacture of and trafficking in such arms. The Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacture and Trafficking in Weapons, Munitions, Explosives and Other Related Materials was bolstered by a declaration issued by the Presidents of the countries members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and Chile and Bolivia; this established a joint mechanism for registration of the purchase and sale of such arms. An inter-American information system based on the Inter-American Convention has also been created, and the Inter-American Commission for the Control of Drug Abuse of the Organization of American States (OAS) has approved model regulations for small arms and their parts and components and ammunition.

It is clear that the excessive stockpiling of small arms and light weapons and their destabilizing effects are a major obstacle to the provision of humanitarian assistance and are likely to exacerbate and prolong conflicts, endanger the lives of civilians and reduce the security and confidence that are necessary for the restoration of peace and stability. This problem, which affects children in particular, is reflected clearly and tragically in the estimate by the United Nations Children's Fund that during the last decade 2 million children have died as a direct consequence of armed conflicts and 6 million have been seriously injured or permanently disabled.

In view of the incredible failure of the Conference on Disarmament, the only United Nations body that deals with this subject, to achieve any progress whatsoever towards nuclear disarmament — despite the efforts of the Chilean delegation — we believe that it is imperative that all countries redouble their efforts towards non-proliferation and disarmament. Moreover, given the indefensible absence of political will to move forward in this area, we fully support the initiative launched by the coalition for a new agenda, which is giving new impetus to disarmament forums and which includes elements for a debate that will more accurately reflect the contemporary situation.

In this connection, we note with regret the fading prospects for the elimination of nuclear weapons and the fact that the international community is today at a crossroads, where it must choose between the grave dangers of proliferation and the challenges of disarmament. As we observed in the Conference on Disarmament, we agree with the view expressed at the Tokyo Forum on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament that progress towards nuclear disarmament is indissolubly linked to the success of nuclear non-proliferation: if the desired results are not achieved in that area, the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons cannot be attained. Consequently, we must strengthen the fundamental commitment of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), undertaken by nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States, by which the former committed themselves to nuclear disarmament and the latter renounced nuclear weapons; to do otherwise would incur the risk of greater proliferation and the continued upgrading of nuclear weapons in the next century.

In this connection, it is important to note that when Chile decided to accede to the NPT in 1995, it did so in the conviction that the Treaty's obligations and rights constituted, for all parties, a genuine programme of action aimed at achieving the abolition of these weapons. In no way did Chile intend at the time to endorse an international order based on the idea that a small group of States would continue to have the right to possess nuclear weapons while a large majority of States would not have that right. Today we are deeply concerned and disappointed by the course taken in the preparatory process for the NPT review conference to be held in 2000, a course which is largely irrelevant to the objective of abolishing nuclear weapons.

Given these circumstances and Chile's absolute respect for international law, we wish to draw particular attention to the International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which underscored the obligation to negotiate in good faith and to achieve nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict international control. We are of the view that the Court's opinion provides a solid doctrinal foundation which should not be ignored.

A review of the elements of the Court's advisory opinion clearly shows that, given its devastating consequences and broad implications, the use of nuclear weapons can cause incalculable harm to mankind. It is for this reason that the Court in its advisory opinion established a link between laws governing disarmament and those governing humanitarian law, taking into account the fact that, under international law and the provisions of, *inter alia*, Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, members of the international community have a binding obligation to maintain peace and security. This is why any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, acts that are highly destabilizing, should be prohibited.

We believe, moreover, that the mere possession of nuclear weapons in situations of intense hostility can lead to a threat of the use of force, which is prohibited by Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter, and by article 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which gives it the character of *jus cogens*, or peremptory rule, to which there can be no exceptions.

Chile is of the view that the Court's advisory opinion unquestionably constitutes a vital conceptual frame of reference for creating opportunities for cooperation based on trust rather than on the threat of a confrontation that would have catastrophic consequences for human beings. We believe too that it would be useful to turn again to the International Court of Justice on other matters of similar importance.

Still in the context of nuclear disarmament, nuclear weapon-free-zones, together with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), constitute the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. They thus represent an important step forward along the road to the progress and well-being of mankind.

We believe that it is necessary to strengthen the objectives of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones. Consequently, the recognition by the international community of the emergence of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas free of such weapons represents a very significant step forward, since it takes account of the legitimate concerns of the non-nuclear-weapon States covering more than half the world's surface. We hope that the idea of converting most of the earth into a nuclear-weapon-free zone will set a good example and thus serve to strengthen the process of nuclear disarmament and to consolidate the non-proliferation regime.

Concerning the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we wish to reaffirm our support for the position expressed on this subject by the Non-Aligned Countries. We believe that, with the support of all parties and necessary flexibility, we can find the consensus required to give substance to the Assembly's fourth such session, the convening of which has already been approved by the Assembly in successive resolutions.

On this subject, Chile wishes to make a concrete proposal to unblock the current impasse that has developed because of the lack of consensus on the agenda of the session and the resulting disagreement on the dates of its convening. Our proposal is to use a formula under which an unofficial group would be established to conduct informal consultations to establish the minimum terms of reference, thereby giving an important impetus to the elaboration of a consensus-based agenda.

The agenda of the session must reflect the fundamental changes that have taken place on the international scene since the last such session, as well as progress made in the field of disarmament and newly emerging questions. The fourth special session devoted to disarmament will have to pay special attention to new proposals; therefore, we wish to express our concern that we continue to take advantage of the participation and creative contributions of non-governmental organizations concerned with disarmament issues.

We wish now to touch on a subject which has always been of the greatest importance to Chile. I refer to the need to continue to adopt measures to regulate the international maritime transport of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel based on the highest international standards of safety. This concern derives from the incalculable risks associated with operations of this nature. It is a matter that should be of concern to the entire international community and which affects, in particular, coastal and island States.

In this connection, we support all initiatives aimed at strengthening the norms, inviting States that ship radioactive materials to provide appropriate guarantees to the States that might be affected, such that they would be able to request the shipping State to ensure that their regulations take account of the rules of the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding transport, as well as to provide all relevant information concerning shipments of radioactive materials, in particular prior and timely notification of the routes selected, contingency plans and recovery of waste in case of accident and payment of compensation in case of injury or damage.

In conclusion, we welcome the reactivation of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with headquarters in Lima, because of the contribution that the Centre is beginning to make peace and international security and because of its role in the policy which Chile has been promoting in the region for the creation of a climate allowing confidence-building measures. We also wish to underscore the sustained support we have shown in the process of reactivating the Regional Centre, not only at the political level, but also through recent financial aid for its operations.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I am very sorry to take the floor at this very late hour, but I would like to say what a pleasure it is for me to see the representative of Chile — a long-standing friend whose great human and professional skills I have learned to appreciate — presiding over the work of the Committee in charge of disarmament and international security. I would like to convey, Mr. Chairman, my congratulations and my most sincere wishes for your success in the difficult task that you have.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the members of the Bureau and to assure them of the full support of my delegation and to tell them how greatly we appreciate your predecessor, Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium, for the remarkable work he did leading the Committee in the last session.

In addition, I would like to thank Mr. Dhanapala for the competent manner in which he has led the Department for Disarmament Affairs and for his useful contributions to our discussions this morning.

The overall political climate in international relations today, the developments in South Asia, the modest results of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the next Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and the lack of agreement on implementation of a work programme for the Conference on Disarmament represent for a number of countries, including my own, a real source of concern and compel us to follow up with greater determination our efforts to carry out successfully our tasks of disarmament and strengthening international peace and security, tasks we have all undertaken together. It is not without reason, then, that my delegation welcomes with some apprehension this last session before the third millennium, even if, at the same time, we know from experience that this Committee will in the end see to it that the interests of all prevail over narrower interests and that we will make the cause of disarmament take a further step forward.

Convinced of the need to put in place a new model for international relations marked by the prevalence of truly universal international peace and security, and aware that disarmament is the very heart of the issue of peace, security and development, African leaders decided during their thirty-fifth summit, held in Algiers last July, to pay very special attention to disarmament with a view to reaching concrete and responsible decisions in order to improve the security situation in Africa and eventually to show the way for the rest of the international community.

From this standpoint, more specifically in dealing with the sensitive issue of the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and in adopting some courageous measures, the Algiers summit clearly showed the seriousness with which Africa intends to take charge of this problem. While in their daily lives African countries scarcely feel affected by the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, they are directly exposed to the often very real threats to their security and stability represented by light weapons, especially when they are smuggled in past the control of State structures and go to terrorist and criminal networks whose avowed objective is to terrorize people and to attack the stability and security of States.

The decision on the proliferation, circulation and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons adopted by the Algiers summit is intended through the concrete measures decided upon, to express the determination of Africa to resolutely attack this scourge which threatens its security and its efforts at recovery. Aware that they must be united and have clear proposals, African States decided, furthermore, to hold a preparatory African meeting for the international conference planned on this issue, to be held not later than the year 2001.

Aware as well that in this regard Africa alone cannot stem the illicit trafficking in small arms, the heads of State and Government have appealed to the international community to lend to the affected African countries the necessary assistance so that they can implement specific programmes to resolve problems related to the proliferation and illicit circulation of these weapons.

Given the scope of this phenomenon and the ravages these weapons have caused in regions that, it should be recalled, do not themselves produce arms, only resolute and coordinated international action, involving first and foremost the countries that do produce arms, can be effective and fruitful. The responsibility of producer countries — and especially of the five permanent members of the Security Council, whose exports amount to 83 per cent of the world market — is thus completely clear.

From this standpoint, the international conference on illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, slated for 2001, is the appropriate opportunity for serious consideration of this issue and, we hope, for the adoption of concrete and effective measures. In this regard it is worth recalling that we will be dealing with the illicit trafficking in weapons and not with legal trade among States, which we are not all calling into question, just as we are not questioning the responsibility of a State to ensure the defence of its territory and the protection of its citizens.

In order to ensure the success of this major conference, we must now begin preparing for it in detail. First we must come to an agreement on the venue. We believe it absolutely necessary to choose a capital where all States, the African States in particular, are represented. From this point of view, United Nations Headquarters here in New York seems to us the most appropriate site, because it offers all the necessary conditions for hosting such a conference as well as the preparatory committees that will have the task of defining the specific scope of this conference, drafting its agenda and establishing the final document that will enshrine its work.

In this regard, while the report of the Group of Governmental Experts may be able to serve as a useful and welcome primary document, it is important that the positions of States also be taken into account, so that we can come up with a global approach to this daunting threat to all of us — States, individuals and, first and foremost, the societies of the South, which day in and day out have bitter experience with these weapons. We also believe it fair and legitimate that the conference be presided over by a member State of the Non-Aligned Movement.

If special attention is being giving, in a general fashion, to conventional arms — and my country can only welcome this — the international community cannot at the same time distance itself from priorities that it defined by consensus in 1978 at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Indeed, the document adopted at that time, which remains the basic reference document in the normative area of disarmament, clearly states in the programme of action adopted by the Assembly, that the priorities and measures should be carried out on an urgent basis in the area of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Further, in order to eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all, a complete programme was mapped out, with timetables for implementation, for the gradual and balanced reduction of stocks of nuclear weapons and of their means of delivery.

Two decades later, how must we assess the progress? What results have been achieved, and do they meet the legitimate expectations of peoples who have been forever traumatized by the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? It first needs to be emphasized that while appreciable results have been achieved, they are far from meeting our expectations, especially when compared with the ambition proclaimed in the General Assembly's very first resolution, adopted in January 1946: "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". (*resolution 1 (I), paragraph 5 (c)*)

Further, the serious developments in South Asia, as well as the return to doctrines that we thought had been relegated to the past and to the outdated theory of nuclear deterrence, have given rise to legitimate fears and increased our anxieties about the world of tomorrow. Nor are we reassured by the nuclear Powers' lack of political will to implement article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), despite the fact that in 1995 they achieved the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

The attitude and lack of flexibility of some States and nuclear Powers exhibited during the meetings of the preparatory committees for the year 2000 NPT Review Conference also do not augur well, though they cannot undermine our determination to work together to create a safer world for future generations.

Given this commitment, we remain confident that, what with the advent of a new millennium and the new hopes it brings, all States will rally under the chairmanship

of Mr. Selebi of South Africa to make this conference a success that will further strengthen the global efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

To this end, the nuclear Powers should, in accordance with article VI of the NPT, acquit themselves in good faith and successfully carry out negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons, as the International Court of Justice quite rightly called upon them to do in its historic Advisory Opinion of July 1996. This is also the import of the proposal of the Group of 21, sponsored by 28 countries, to create a special committee to establish a timetable for the step-by-step reduction of nuclear weapons. This proposal deserves serious consideration — as do other proposals that have been submitted, including by my country, to various forums, such as the Conference on Disarmament.

In this context I would like to say that — above and beyond the agreement to add five new members, which my delegation welcomes — we are concerned by the lack of a consensus on the agenda for the Conference on Disarmament. Yet this problem should not, under any circumstances, undermine our determination to pursue our efforts to allow this major body to fulfil its role and successfully carry out its mission.

On the other hand, I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, who, as the depositary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, convened a meeting in Vienna just a few days ago in order to facilitate the entry into force of this Treaty. My country commends this initiative and the declaration it produced, just as we commend the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which on 1 October adopted a resolution amending article VI of the statute of the IAEA and thereby redressed the previous under-representation of Africa. We are particularly pleased with this because this agreement expanding the membership from 35 to 43 occurred under the chairmanship of Algeria, which was the first, 25 years ago, to request the amendment of this article.

In accordance with the basic choices it has made since it achieved independence, Algeria for many years now has opted for promoting exclusively peaceful uses of nuclear technology and for the continued strengthening of the non-proliferation regime as an essential means of progressing towards general and complete disarmament. This is why in 1994 Algeria sovereignly adhered to the NPT and voluntarily submitted its installations to the IAEA safeguards system. Algeria has thus shown, through its various actions, its strong and effective commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and general and complete disarmament — a principal objective for the preservation of peace and international security.

That is also why Algeria has always advocated nuclear-weapon-free zones and, in February 1998, acceded to the Pelindaba Treaty establishing the African nuclear-weapon-free zone, thereby becoming the third State party. It is also why, in the Mediterranean region, it has always endeavoured, together with other riparian States, to establish an area of peace, security, cooperation and common prosperity. Moreover, it is why it believes it natural and logical that this commitment should be extended to the Middle East, a highly sensitive area in every respect with which it has many links and where Israel alone refuses to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to submit its installations to IAEA control. In this respect, it is essential that all States of the region decisively and unequivocally support the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This appeal also applies to South Asia, where the arms race between two neighbouring countries is a source of great concern.

In this connection, we believe it essential to work, together and unrelentingly, to ensure that our shared conviction that the establishment of such zones can strengthen international peace and security will take root in people's minds and in actual fact, supported as it is by the ongoing and, we hope, irreversible spread of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which today cover 104 countries.

We have tirelessly and increasingly advocated general and complete disarmament not merely to indulge in a ritual exercise, but because we are convinced that disarmament has become a vital need, the satisfaction of which would enable humankind to launch a qualitatively new era of its history through the creation of a society free from fear and whose resources have been reallocated from armament to development and the prosperity of nations. While we fully grasp the difficulty of the task and the considerable efforts that must still be made to reach this goal — since the job of civilization is inevitably a long-term endeavour — we remain firmly convinced that this choice is within reach if only an end can be put to actions and policies that have fanned rivalries and hatred and if the simple truth can prevail that security, development and prosperity are ineluctable.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.